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Analyzing the Vulnerabilities of Israel's National Security in the Age of Cyberpolitics

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Extended Abstract

Introduction: With the establishment of Israel in West Asia, extensive governmental efforts were initiated to prevent the consolidation of this new actor's presence within the region's dynamic political landscape. On the one hand, actions undertaken by Palestinian resistance groups, as representatives of the Palestinian people, and, on the other, measures adopted by countries such as Jordan, Egypt, and Syria contributed to the emergence of direct military confrontations in 1948, 1967, and 1973. In these conflicts, Israel succeeded in achieving military victories with the support of states such as Britain, the United States, and France, thereby laying the foundations of its security and national identity. Drawing on the experience gained from these wars, the policy of maximizing hard power was prioritized by Israel's political and military leadership as one of the principal pil-

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lars of its national security strategy, a policy that continues to shape Israeli security thinking today. Nevertheless, although the conventional military threats that had historically confronted Israel—particularly those that prevailed prior to the October 7 attacks—have to some extent diminished, Israeli interests have increasingly come under threat in other domains and from new actors. With the emergence of the age of cyberpolitics and the growing prominence of non-state actors alongside state actors, Israel is no longer threatened solely through its physical borders; rather, threats increasingly emerge from within, exploiting existing discursive cleavages among its diverse social groups. Indeed, as the concept of power has become increasingly complex in the contemporary era and international politics has moved from realpolitik toward cyberpolitics, the agents through which power is exercised have undergone significant transformation and are no longer exclusively under state control. The presence of multiple actors capable of imposing their will on others, including states as traditional agents of power, has facilitated the dissemination of competing messages, each of which may embody conflicting values and interests. Consequently, the international system is confronted with a plurality of competing values, each of which can transcend the boundaries of individual political units, penetrate their domestic spheres, and influence patterns of behavior within them. Under such conditions, the imposition of one's will upon others—as one of the fundamental definitions of power—can be achieved without reliance on material or coercive capabilities and instead through non-material and informational means. The first section of this study examines the conceptual framework of cyberpolitics and the transformation of the fundamental definition of power. The subsequent section analyzes the principal security threats confronting Israel in two distinct dimensions: geopolitical and demographic. The following section examines Israel's extensive institutional network established to address the threats associated with this era. Finally, the study examines and explains the experience of extensive foreign influence operations directed against Israel's national security, with the aim of assessing the existence and implications of such threats in the context of Israel's extensive surveillance and monitoring apparatus.

Methodology: The present study is qualitative research employing a descriptive-explanatory approach. It draws on qualitative data collected through documentary research and analyzed using qualitative inference.

Results: With the advent of the age of cyberpolitics and the transformation of the conceptual framework of power, it has become possible to influence the behavior of other actors and compel them to accept one's will without relying primarily on hard power, but rather through non-material and informational means. Although domains such as military power cannot, of course, be excluded from strategic calculations, new forms of challenging power have emerged that must also be taken into consideration. In this context, actors that once sought to secure their survival in the anarchic international system by increasing their military capabilities, thereby seeking security and a balance of power, are now confronted with new challengers in the cyber domain. Such forms of power have the potential to transform a state's values into perceived vulnerabilities or countervailing forces. Within this context, an actor such as Israel, whose fundamental policy since its establishment has been centered on maximizing power and which continues to pursue this policy vigorously, faces compounded threats in the age of cyberpolitics. On the one hand, the existence of social divisions and multiple societal fault lines increases Israel's vulnerability in the domain of internal security. On the other hand, this emerging domain of power has the potential to exploit these vulnerabilities and contribute to the destabilization of Israeli society from within. This article examined the potential vulnerability of Israel's internal security in this emerging era through a number of illustrative cases. The findings indicate that Israel, owing on the one hand to its geopolitical vulnerabilities and, on the other, to its demographic vulnerabilities and multiple societal fault lines, is likely to face fundamental challenges from emerging threats in the age of cyberpolitics, particularly cognitive influence operations. These challenges may ultimately contribute to dysfunction within domestic social and political institutions and potentially create conditions conducive to internal destabilization. At the same time, the extensive monitoring and countermeasures undertaken by Israel's complex institutional network in response to this issue demonstrate the perceived significance of such threats to Israel's internal security. These threats have the potential to extend beyond national security and target Israel's political, economic, social, cultural, and military interests across different parts of the world. The experience of influence operations directed against Israel—both those targeting Israeli society and those targeting Israeli interests in other countries—indicates that such operations have achieved a considerable degree of effectiveness and have

succeeded in diverting a significant portion of Israel's security and military resources and attention toward addressing them.

Conclusion: Given Israel's geopolitical vulnerabilities and demographic challenges, the presence of multiple active societal fault lines, and the extensive monitoring of this issue by Israel's complex institutional network, coupled with the experience of numerous actions undertaken against it by both state and non-state actors, Israel's national security has become increasingly exposed to emerging threats.

Key words: Cyberpolitics; National Security; Soft Power; Cognitive Influence; Israel.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in conducting this research study.